UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

DATE: October 2, 1980

SUBJECT: Tailings Piles Polluting the Big River

FROM: Charles H. Hajinian
Director, Office of Research and Development

TO: Senior Staff

Attached is a trip report by Ed Vest on a reconnaissance of the proposed Pine Ford Lake area on the Big River, a tributary of the Meramec River. As reported, the river is contaminated from past and present runoff from lead and barrite mine tailings. Recent analysis has shown that bottom feeding fish contain high concentrations of lead, zinc and cadmium and are probably not safe for human consumption. This is a condition which should be corrected since one of the proposed uses of Pine Ford Lake is for water supply.

I am calling your attention to this matter so that any action which may fall under EPA's jurisdiction can be started. Please contact me or Ed Vest for further information.

Attachment

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| CONCURRENCES | | | | | | | | |
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| SYMBOL | EIST | RDEV | | | | | | |
| SJRNAME | Vest | CHH | | | | | | |
| DATE | 10-2-80 | | | | | | | |

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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

DATE: August 4, 1980

SUBJECT: Pine Ford Lake and Big River Reconnaissance

FROM: Edward C. Vest
EIS Coordinator

TO: File THRU: C.H. Hajinian, Director, Office of RDEV

July 30 and 31, I participated in a meeting and field reconnaissance of the Big River in the vicinity of the proposed Pine Ford Lake. The area around Flat River and Bonne Terre, Missouri is loaded with tailings piles from past lead and barrite mining. Most of the huge tailings piles are adjacent to the river or creeks where the tailings wash into the river during rain events. The bottom of the Big River is composed of tailings sediments between the towns named above and the Washington State Park.

Under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Mo. Dept. of Conservation are studying the Big River and its environs for the Corps of Engineers proposed feasibility study for Pine Ford Lake. Also involved with the studies are the Corps and the Fish and Wildlife Fish Toxicology Laboratory in Columbia, Missouri.

Thursday morning, a meeting was held with the various agencies, members of the public and environmental group and reporters to discuss the ongoing studies. A copy of the agenda is attached. Approximately 50 people attended.

As a point of interest, the Toxicology Lab has determined that bottom feeding fish in the Big River contain high concentrations of lead, cadmium and zinc and are probably not safe for human consumption. The following items need to be followed up on:

1. Is runoff from mine tailings subject to the NPDES process? Since these are from underground mines, they do not fall under OSM control. Also, most of the mines are abandoned with the land containing the tailings piles having been deeded to the local community or county.

2. Since the tailings contain heavy metals, lead, cadmium, zinc as well as other trace metals, do these piles fall under EPA's RCRA or Hazardous Materials regulations?

3. One of the purposes of Pine Ford Lake is for drinking water supply. There is a possibility that the heavy metals will go into suspension in a reservoir condition which has thermal stratifications. This would occur in the hypolimnion under anaerobic conditions. If this does occur, the water may not be fit for human consumption.

During the coming months, these items will be delved into. I think it is very important that a method of curtailing the tailings piles runoff be developed.

Attachment